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ABSTRACT

The continuing education of professors is becoming an issue for college and university administrators as educational institutions confront a work force that will not significantly change for the next 10 to 15 years. A two-part study was conducted to investigate activity in the area of professional development for mid-career faculty. The first part of the study consisted of a comprehensive literature search to identify existing programs which might be helpful in establishing a model for future use. The literature review identified 25 colleges and universities with some form of professional development program, and a number of collaborative programs in which colleges and universities in the same geographical area had formed a coalition. The second part of the study involved contacting the identified colleges and consortia to gather information about their programs. General findings included the following: (1) most faculty renewal programs operated under the concept of faculty development focusing on the individual professor; (2) most institutions placed an emphasis on the new faculty member in their development programs; (3) most institutions viewed professional development as an individual concern for mid-career faculty; (4) two-year institutions were more concerned with improving instructional techniques than four-year colleges; and (5) a few institutions were concerned with ways in which faculty and institutional goals could be more effectively related. (HB)

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# THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF MID-CAREER PROFESSORS: WHERE IS IT TODAY?

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## THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF MID-CAREER PROFESSORS: WHERE IS IT TODAY?

### The Problem

The continuing professional education of professors, traditionally the primary concern of the individual professor, is becoming an issue for the administrators of colleges and universities. A major reason for this is that educational institutions are confronting a work force that will not significantly change for the next ten to fifteen years. Chait and Gueths report that "the modal age of tenured faculty, now two-thirds of the full-time work force, is 36-45, with relatively few faculty over 55. . . For the most part, then what we see will be what we get for many years to come. (6:30). Further, the Carnegie Council projects that there will be a chronic depression in the academic labor market during the next twenty-five years (10). Opportunities to recruit new faculty will become less and less as the century draws to a close.

In addition, changes brought on by the problems in the economy have combined to create a situation in which educators have not been as free to relocate. The gradual decline of this classic means by which professors and institutions alike have renewed themselves, has resulted in the loss of a major source of new challenges and fresh perspectives necessary in a vital institution.

The fiscal restraints imposed upon the colleges and universities have helped to create an internal situation in which opportunities for professional growth have been reduced. There is a decline in the traditional means of sustaining intellectual vitality, such as visiting professorships, attendance at professional meetings, sabbatical leaves, and funds for research. (2, 15) All of these issues have contributed, to the fact that morale is particularly low among faculty who entered higher education during the expansive era of the late 1960 and early 1970's.

In a recent study conducted in the California public colleges and universities dealing with professional development, a major concern expressed by administrators was the issue of the viability of the current faculty (4). The administrators who were interviewed in this study indicated that a critical problem was how to assist the tenured faculty to remain current not only in their present teaching assignments but also in related fields of study and research. Ways to solve the problem were less obvious as each institution struggled with the issues.

And finally, the Chancellor's Office of the Community Colleges in California in concert with consultants from the University of California, Davis, determined that professional development (retraining) was a major need not only for faculty in their institutions but also for administrators. (7) This position was further supported by John Naisbitt in MEGATRENDS when he stated: "in education we are moving from the short-term considerations of completing our training at the end of high school or college to lifelong education and retraining". (17:93) Professional education among professors in institutions of higher education has become a concern which needs to be addressed in the next few decades. The current faculty need assistance to continue to develop along avenues which will simultaneously benefit the individual, the institutions, and society. Before any major plans are proposed the first step is to identify what has been done to

assist faculty between 40 and 50 years of age, who have taught for a number of years and who intend to remain active in the field for another 15 to 20 years. Thus, this study focused initially on identifying colleges and universities who have attempted to address the issue of professional renewal for mid-career, mid-age faculty.

## The Study

The study to determine what is happening in the area of professional development for mid-career faculty was composed of two parts which were conducted over a six month period. The first part comprised a comprehensive literature search which included not only an ERIC search of more than 120 documents, but also an examination of recent journals in the areas of education, training and personnel work. The purpose of this search was to identify programs in the area of professional development among college and university mid-career faculty which might be helpful in establishing a model for future use.

As a result of the literature review dealing with professional development, over 25 colleges and universities which were identified as having some form of professional development program. In addition to individual programs, a number of collaborative relationships were uncovered in which colleges and universities within the same geographical area and/or same function (i.e. small liberal arts colleges) had formed a coalition. Among the coalitions highlighted were the Great Lakes Colleges Association which is composed of 12 liberal arts colleges; the Pennsylvania Coalition composed of the colleges and universities in Pennsylvania; and the tri-state coalition composed of 22 colleges in Minnesota, North and South Dakotas. (8,9,18)

The second part of the study included writing to the institutions and coalitions which appeared to have programs specifically related to the continued professional development of mid-career faculty. As a result of the literature search and the correspondence with identified colleges and universities, the writer arrived at four thoughts concerning the present state of professional development. The first is that most programs geared toward faculty renewal operate under the traditional concepts of 'faculty development'. The focus and the responsibility of traditional faculty development programs is on the individual faculty member. Whatever he/she needs to improve on a professional, instructional and personal level is decided by the faculty member. The center of all activity is the faculty member. Institutional goals, mission and objectives are integrated into individual faculty development programs only to the degree that the faculty member wishes to consider them. (12) As a result faculty/professional development in this era of ever decreasing fiscal and human resources becomes tangential, even superfluous to the larger tasks facing the universities and colleges.

In keeping with traditional faculty development, most institutions which have implemented a faculty development program, have placed the emphasis on the development of new faculty members. It is assumed that new faculty need assistance in their instructional development and to this end are sometimes paired with a tenured older faculty as mentors within the same department. In addition, a series of orientation sessions are sometimes held to acquaint new faculty members with the procedures within that particular department.

Numerous books and articles are available which identify high quality programs dealing with the instructional and professional development of new faculty. Programs addressing the needs of the older, tenured faculty relate specifically to their role as professionals: in the university this is most usually translated as promoting research and publication; and in the two-year colleges this may be demonstrated in the level of activity the senior faculty members engage in local and national professional associations. Thus, it appears that most colleges and universities continue to view professional development as an individual concern for mid-career faculty.

The third general finding is that there is a difference between the way 2-yr colleges view professional reeducation and the way that 4-yr institutions view it. From the colleges surveyed, it appears that the issue of tenure and longevity aside, faculty in two year institutions are much more concerned with improving their instructional techniques than are faculty in four-year institutions. (1,14) Most four-year colleges and universities, except with the orientation sessions or mentoring provided junior faculty, are indifferent to the issues surrounding instructional improvement in the classroom. The exception to this finding are the small liberal arts colleges such as Bowdoin or Earlham in which concern about the instructional aspects of teaching is paramount.

A fourth major finding is that there are a few colleges and universities which have expanded their understanding of faculty development to include a more contemporary perspective. These institutions have begun to talk in terms of what is good for the institution and how the professional goals of the individual faculty member can more directly and effectively relate to the institution. (19) Many of the larger institutions have therefore focused their professional development efforts in the areas of assisting their faculty in expanding their teaching repertoire to include related and often more contemporary fields of inquiry as part of their teaching load. Using the traditional methods of released time and paid leave, university systems such as the SUNY and the University of Wisconsin have encouraged senior faculty to explore alternative fields when their teaching area is either antiquated or has progressed beyond the faculty member's present knowledge level.

Other institutions such as California State University, Long Beach, have released faculty members for a percentage of their load so that they can then study a new field for future teaching. And at the University of Kansas, faculty in one college are encouraged to work with faculty in another college to explore ways to integrate the various fields such as law and engineering.

A few smaller colleges such as Bowdoin and Lawrence University (Wisconsin) have focused their efforts on improving instruction in the classroom. For example, at Lawrence, a faculty member may request time to work with a master drama coach. The purpose of the sessions are to improve the delivery system of the faculty member in the classroom. Other programs which provide assistance for faculty members to develop their materials and their presentation skills have been put into practice at Bowdoin. Table 1 identifies representative colleges and universities which focused on either all faculty or specifically mid-career/tenured faculty. The institutions which focused on new faculty were not included in the study.

TABLE 1

Representative Colleges and Universities with Professional Development Programs Which Included Mid-Career Faculty

| INSTITUTION | FACULTY FOCUS | CHARACTERISTICS |
|---|---|---|
| Austin College<br>Sherman, Texas | All | Committed to five-year career development programs for every faculty member. |
| Bowdoin College<br>Brunswick, Maine | All | Course development for new faculty, revised classroom teaching practices for tenured faculty. |
| California State University, Long Beach<br>Long Beach, CA | All | Structured program geared toward the improvement of instruction. |
| Furman University<br>Greenville, SC | Mid-Career | Professional growth plans stressing instructional improvement. |
| Great Lakes College Association<br>Ann Arbor, MI<br>(12 liberal arts colleges) | All | Comprehensive program encompasses all aspects of faculty and professional development. |
| Monroe Community College<br>Rochester, NY | Mid-Career | Comprehensive program over 2 year period; focus on retraining faculty for specific teaching needs. |
| University of Kansas<br>Lawrence, Kansas | Mid-Career | Focus on career renewal for tenured faculty; visiting professorships in other colleges. |
| University of Sains Malaysia<br>Penang, Malaysia | All | Focus on individualized improvement packages aimed at incorporating educational technology into teaching strategies. |

In summary, the findings suggest that although most colleges and universities still view professional development from the traditional, i.e. individual approach, in some institutions attempts are being made to relate the goals of the individual with those of the institution. And even more critical, a few colleges and universities are beginning to see the need to concern themselves with the professional growth of the mid-career faculty.

## Implications

The findings presented as a result of this study suggest a series of implications that colleges and universities must confront if they are to assist mid-career faculty in maintaining currency and relevancy. The first implication is that faculty who generally need (as demonstrated in generally poor student/peer evaluations and no current research in progress) to be revitalized to meet the educational problems faced by the institution are not trained to approach their teaching from this rational problem-solving approach (11:132). Traditional education prepared faculty to teach by imitation rather than by design. Therefore, to improve one's teaching style and technique would be a foreign, if not unacceptable, thought to most faculty. This realization brings us to yet another implication: the faculty who most need assistance are those who are most resistant to becoming involved in any kind of externally developed professional growth program. Either because of their traditional educational background or general resistance to change, these faculty are not the ones who participate in seminars, workshops, colloquia available on most campuses.

It is clear, therefore, that underlying any professional growth program aimed at the older, more resistant faculty, there needs to be appropriate leadership assumed at all levels in the institution. It is not enough for the department chair or college committee to support professional development. The entire management team should be aware of these needs in each area and demonstrate commitment by channeling resources to the betterment of the existing faculty.

Another implication of this study is that as long as professional growth is associated with the traditional concept of 'faculty development', it is highly unlikely that it will become integrated into the fabric of the institution. Because it is seen as primarily benefiting the individual faculty member, it has not been incorporated into the goals and objectives of most institutions. The and colleges faced with an older faculty, limited opportunities to hire new faculty, and fiscal restraints must begin to confront the issue of reeducation not as faculty development but as a concept that will mutually benefit the faculty member and the institution.

A broader implication which will impact the future of higher education is that of training itself. Not only do we need to be concerned with the professional development of faculty within the institution, but we must also address the issue of who the students of the future will be. President Guzzetta, University of Akron, suggested in a recent article that higher education needs to jump into the arena of retraining with more action and less words. He cited the following statistics to corroborate his position:

> "Approximately 64 million adult Americans are involved ion some form of training or education. The total enrollment in all American colleges and universities is between eleven and twelve million, or less than 20 percent." (13:11)

Industry, business and the military are committed to the notion of continued development of their personnel. They may choose to work with higher education in the training and development of their employees or they may continue to develop and expand their own training and reeducation programs, bypassing the local colleges and universities.

The choices are clear: the colleges and universities can become actively involved in the continued professional development of its mid-career faculty to more adequately address the needs of business, industry and society in general, or they can continue to support the traditional concepts of professional development thereby allowing the corporations to manage their own educational needs.

Do we stay in the business of educating society by setting the example for the other 'businesses' in society or do we default for lack of direction or willingness to change a traditional pattern and attitude. Do we adapt our purposes to meet the rapid changes and demands of today and tomorrow or do we stay with the dinosaur and become the stately relic found in the antechambers of most Museums of Natural History. The choice is still ours, but not for long. We must take a stand now.

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